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ABSTRACT

The author suggests that quality selection of textbooks at the local level is more likely to occur when: (1) administrators involve teachers, subject-matter specialists, and others in the selection process; (2) these individuals comprise a committee which makes a regular, continuing study of textbooks; (3) they consider using materials recently developed in various project centers; and (4) they base their selection on the school system's course of study, local children's needs and interests, materials currently in use, teachers' academic backgrounds, and community attitudes. Fifteen specific guidelines for the selection of educational textbooks, guidelines for the selection of supplemental materials, and suggestions for the local staff all center on the belief that curriculum development determines textbook selection; textbooks should not determine the curriculum. (DD)

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GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

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Iowa does not have state adoption of textbooks. The choice is left at the local level.

> Iowa Code (301.1) authorizes and empowers the board of directors of each and every school corporation to adopt textbooks for the teaching of all branches that are now or may hereafter be authorized to be taught in the public schools of the state, and to contract for and buy said books and any and all other necessary supplies . . . .

The Department of Public Instruction feels that textbook selection should be at the local level. We also feel that with local privilege there also is local responsibility. With the immense amount of new textbooks on the market it becomes a heavy task to make textbook selections. It is supremely important for every local school to make such selections freely and with full information. Teachers and administrators are very busy and it is because of our desire to help these busy people that we have prepared this publication.

The body of this publication is written in terms of the definition given below.

I. DEFINITION OF A TEXTBOOK

> (1) Any manual of instruction; (2) a book dealing with a definite subject of study, systematically arranged, intended for use at a specified level of instruction, and used as a principal source of study material for a given course.
>
> -- Dictionary of Education, Second edition. Good--McGraw-Hill, 1959

In order to meet the need for better educational tools to achieve the goals expected of today's students, we should move away from the older accepted concept of one basic textbook as constituting a course of study. Students need several textbooks of various levels plus a wide variety of supplemental material.

Curriculum development determines textbook selection; textbooks should not determine the curriculum.

Quality selection of textbooks is more likely to occur when:

1. Administrators involve teachers, subject-matter specialists, and other qualified persons in the process of textbook selection.
2. This group comprises a committee which makes a regular, continuing study of textbooks.
3. Committees give consideration to utilizing materials which have been recently developed in various project centers. (Such centers have produced excellent materials in a number of curriculum areas. Information about such materials may be obtained from the Department of Public Instruction or college personnel.)
4. The committee bases its selection on the school system's course of study, local children's needs and interests, materials currently in use, teachers' academic backgrounds, and community attitudes.

II. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

1. Does the textbook meet the basic philosophy of the American democratic society?
   - -- Does it demonstrate consideration for the human worth and dignity of all people?
   - -- Does it show a strong commitment to equal rights and responsibilities for all citizens?
   - -- Does it show unbiased concern for religious, political, and intellectual freedom?
   - -- Does it show objective reflection for the multi-ethnic character and cultural diversity of our society?
   - -- Does it, through its illustrations, reflect the multi-ethnic character of our society?
2. Does the content challenge the students to think and find solutions which lead to the inquiry method of learning?
3. Does the textbook reflect valid scholarship?
   - -- Is there meaningful organization and emphasis of content?
   - -- Is there accurate, authoritative, and realistic presentation of factual material?
   - -- Is the presentation historically accurate?
   - -- Is contemporary research reflected?
   - -- Is there a fair approach to the treatment of all sides of controversial issues?
   - -- Is the author qualified in the particular field in which he is writing?

4. Does the textbook support a previously formulated philosophy regarding:
   -- What will be taught?
   -- Why it will be taught?
   -- To whom it will be taught?
   -- How it will be taught?
5. Does the textbook both support and complement the basic educational objectives within a specific subject area and classroom?
   -- Does it show relevancy to the subject at hand?
   -- Is it compatible to the reading level of the student for whom it is intended?
   -- Will it tend to stimulate the interest of the students?
   -- Will it promote further growth of the students?
6. Does the textbook include adequate and relevant study aids?
   -- Are the illustrations, graphs, charts, and maps up to date?
   -- Does it include a good glossary?
   -- Does it have a good index?
   -- Does it have suggestions for fortifying learning: questions, exercises, optional projects?
   -- Does it suggest interesting activities that will challenge pupils to do independent investigation?
   -- Does it provide a variety of learning skills?
7. Is the book so organized that the teacher must follow the book, or is it flexible enough to permit the teacher to choose what fits into his plan of teaching?

8. Does the textbook have a manual that is a point of departure or a teacher's guide rather than a comprehensive instructional program or a rigid frame of reference?
9. Does the content of the textbook contribute to the complete development of students by attempting to interrelate various disciplines?
10. Does the textbook reflect high quality through:
    -- Typography
    -- Illustrations
    -- Other aesthetics
        -- Is the material sufficiently pleasing to the reader?
        -- Is it clumsy or refined?
11. Does the textbook have a recent copyright date? (Textbooks with a copyright date more than five years old are generally considered outdated; however, there may be exceptions. Even though the copyright date may be recent, careful examination would reveal whether there have been real changes or merely minor revisions from previous editions.)
12. Does the textbook meet its chief criteria as they relate to its contents, approach to the subject and objectives? At the same time is it durable enough to last for the period of its intended use?
13. Does the textbook compare favorably with a variety of contemporary text materials and basic resources?
14. Does the textbook present the material in a logical continuum from one grade level to the next?

15. Does the textbook fit into a designed sequence of study (K-12) and into other courses that form a part of the context or environment of the course at hand?

III. SELECTION OF SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Rationale

It is acknowledged that certain of the foregoing guidelines may be deliberately set aside in the selection and assignment of instructional material to be used to supplement the basic text. If a text is chosen following the above guidelines, the library and media center can appropriately contain a variety of materials. A multi-sensory approach would provide opportunities to individualize instruction. Material and equipment for listening and viewing could be selected, designed, and located for group and individual activities.

Inclusion of biases, primary sources, and controversial materials as defined in the following paragraphs should be considered in the selection of supplemental materials.

Bias is the attitude of one segment of the population toward another group, individual, or idea. One man's guiding philosophy may be another man's bias. Nationalism and patriotism, socialism and capitalism, communism, democracy, and the Judeo-Christian religious tradition--each of these is considered by someone to be a proper way of life and by someone else to be a bias.

Primary Sources are understood to be contemporary accounts by writers and researchers who were directly involved in, or observers of, a particular event or time period.

Controversial Material is that material which, when introduced, arouses strong reactions representing different points of view. There are many subjects which, by the nature of our contemporary society, are intrinsically controversial. Since what is considered controversial may vary from district to district, the teacher is encouraged to develop an awareness of the atmosphere within his teaching community.

Recommended Questions for Consideration in Reviewing Supplemental Materials

-- Is the author's selection of materials appropriate to the period for which it is to provide insights?

-- Does the vocabulary suit the age level for which it is intended?

-- Does the supplementary material provide for levels of difficulty?

-- Is the content consistent with curricular goals?

-- Is the material reliable?

-- Does the material promote logical and creative thinking, purposeful discussion, and insightful learning?

-- Will the material stimulate reaction so violent as to detract from its value?

-- Are the teachers who wish to introduce the material familiar with the contents and with the possible ramifications of providing such material for classroom consideration?

-- Are the administrators and supervisors aware of the possible ramifications of providing such materials for classroom use and in agreement with the decisions?

Such materials will allow the student researcher to become familiar with problems and attitudes of various segments of the world. Teachers must carefully review such materials and exercise professional judgment in their use.

IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LOCAL STAFF

-- Each school district should give consideration to the usefulness of expanding this publication to meet specific local needs.

-- In certain communities it will be prudent and helpful to establish ad hoc advisory committees to share in the setting of additional local guidelines.

-- The introduction of a textbook should involve inservice education for those teachers directly involved. Many times the company from which the textbook is purchased has full-time consultants who will give inservice education.

-- It is good practice to conduct a pilot use of newly recommended material before it is selected for widespread use, particularly where the guidelines for controversial material have been applied.

In the final analysis, it is the classroom teacher who is the unifying element. He is the one who must apply his best judgment in complying with guidelines adopted.